Honduras: Forced eviction of peasant group, Santa Ana de Aguan/Yoro

113 women and men peasants, members of the peasant group “6th of November”, living in Santa Ana de Aguan, Yoro municipality, Department of Yoro, had to suffer a serious form of violence on April 10th, 2007. The peasant group was violently evicted for the sixth time from the land which had been assigned to them by the National Agrarian Institute in 1982; four members of the group have been abducted by a paramilitary group led by a landowner who claims to be the land owner. At this moment the peasant families are not living on their land without access to their food source because the landowner threatens with death any member of the group who tries to enter the land plot.

In view of this situation it is of utmost importance to urge the Government of Honduras to investigate these violent and repressive acts and to protect the peasant group’s access to their land. Please send a letter to the President of Honduras, in which you express your concern about this case. Please send a copy of your letter to the Foreign Minister and to the legal representative of the peasants.

Background

In 1982 the peasant group “6th of November” was settled on the land by the National Agrarian Institute (INA). Based on the then valid Agrarian Reform Law the INA expropriated 69 “manzanas” (about 48 hectares) because they were not being cultivated and assigned these to the peasant group, which at present comprises 26 families, i.e. 113 persons. For more than 20 years the peasants lived peacefully on their land, growing basic staples and vegetables. In 2003 the first violent eviction took place and the crops and water irrigation system were destroyed. After a second violent eviction in 2003, the case was denounced and taken to the Supreme Court of Justice. After waiting for three years, the Supreme Court sentenced in favor of the peasant group and ordered the Judge of Yoro that the civil sentence which was the basis for the eviction order be annulled in order to reestablish the peasants’ rights. However, this judge never complied with the Supreme Court’s sentence.

The peasants returned to their land, after the big landowner was ordered to leave the land. But the answer of the landowner was violence, creating a paramilitary
group in order to attack the peasants, the first action of this group led to the injury of an 18 year old youngster. According to testimonies of the peasant group since that time the harassment has become each time more violent and constant: then two members of the group were intercepted by hooded individuals when traveling in their vehicle, one of them was hurt by two bullet impacts in his leg. The peasants state that the National Police denied to transport the injured peasant to the hospital. Some days later a group of armed men fired shots close to the peasants, supposedly to intimidate them. At the end of 2006, INA gave the land in possession to the peasant group and in fulfillment of the sentence by the Supreme Court of Justice, i.e. the very same land assigned to them in 1982.

On April 10, a paramilitary group under the leadership of lieutenant Hector Javier Chávez López abducted the following four members of the peasant group: Jimmy Adonis Licona, Julio Geovany Zelaya, Julio Pastor Ramos y Lucas Murillo. According to witnessing peasants, agents of the National Police collaborated with the paramilitaries and transported the kidnapped persons to the police offices as if they were being detained. A peasant was held prisoner for six days and set free by order of the judge. The peasants pointed out that that very same day the peasant group had again been evicted by State police agents.

**Mandate of the Emergency Network**

Honduras is State party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Therefore all State authorities have to respect, protect and fulfil the rights recognized in these treaties, particularly the Right to Food.

End of the action: June 30, 2007

**Addresses**

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*Please inform FIAN about any reply you might get*

**Translation of the Letter**

Your Excellency,

With profound concern I got to know, that 113 women and men peasants, members of the peasant group “6th of November”, living in Santa Ana de Aguan, Department of
Yoro, are victims of grave and constant forms of violence. According to this information, the most recent violent occurrences happened on April 10th, 2007, when four members of the group were abducted by a paramilitary group, one of them was detained for six days in the police precinct. The names of the kidnapped peasants are as follows: Jimmy Adonis Licona, Julio Geoavny Zelaya, Julio Pastor Ramos y Lucas Murillo. According to testimonies of the peasants, this same day the peasants were violently evicted by agents of the National Police and the DGIC, which was declared illegal by the district attorney of Yoro. At present, the peasants are living outside of their land, without any access to their food source. The peasants indicate that they have been cultivating these lands for more than 25 years, which were assigned to them by INA in 1982 and that they have a verdict in their favor of 2006 by the Supreme Court of Justice.

Honduras is State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Therefore, all State authorities have to respect, protect and guarantee the rights recognized in these treaties, particularly the Right to Food.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask you to take all immediate and appropriate measures in cooperation with all related authorities in order to

- Guarantee the lawful possession of the peasants of the land which had been assigned to them by INA according to the verdict by the Supreme Court of Justice and to protect the access to this land of the peasant group.
- Investigate extensively what happened on April 10th, particularly the handling of the agents of DGIC and the National Police during the forced eviction.
- Disarm and legally take measures against the paramilitary group responsible for the abductions on that day.

Yours sincerely,

Su Excelencia
Lic. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales
Presidente de la República de Honduras
Colonia Lomas del Mayab
Boulevard Juan Pablo II
Tegucigalpa
Honduras
Edificio José Cecilio del Valle
Fax ++504 - 239-3298

Excelentísimo Señor Presidente,

con profunda preocupación he recibido la información de que 113 campesinos y campesinas, miembros del grupo campesino „6 de noviembre“, situado en Santa Ana de Aguan, departamento de Yoro, son objeto de graves y constantes formas de violencia. Según mis informaciones, en los hechos violentos más recientes el día 10
de abril del año corriente cuatro miembros del grupo fueron secuestrados por un grupo paramilitar, uno de ellos detenido durante seis días en la sede policial. Los nombres de los campesinos secuestrados son: Jimmy Adonis Licona, Julio Geovany Zelaya, Julio Pastor Ramos y Lucas Murillo. Según los testimonios de los campesinos, el mismo día el grupo campesino fue desalojado forzosamente por agentes de la Policía Nacional y de la DGIC, hecho que fue declarado ilegal por el fiscal de Yoro.

En este momento los/as campesinos/as están fuera de sus tierras privados de su fuente de alimentación. Los/as campesinos/as indican que ya tienen más de 25 años de trabajar estas tierras que les fueron adjudicadas por el INA en el año 1982 y que cuentan con un fallo de la Corte Suprema de Justicia del año 2006 a su favor.

Honduras es Estado Parte del Pacto Internacional de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales, y del Pacto Internacional de Derechos Civiles y Políticos. Por lo tanto, toda autoridad del Estado tiene que respetar, proteger y garantizar los derechos reconocidos en estos tratados, en particular el derecho a la alimentación.

Por lo tanto, le solicito, Sr. Presidente, adoptar en cooperación con las demás autoridades competentes las medidas inmediatas y apropiadas para

- Garantizar la debida puesta en posesión de los/as campesinos/as en la tierra que les fue asignada por el INA en ejercicio del fallo de la Corte Suprema de Justicia y proteger el acceso del grupo campesino a la misma.
- Investigar debida y exhaustivamente los hechos del 10 de abril, en particular la actuación de los agentes de la DGIC y de la Policía Nacional durante el desalojo forzoso;
- Desarmar y proceder penalmente contra el grupo paramilitar responsable de los secuestros en ese día.

Atentamente